

The Haunted Dominie

And Other Poems

By GEORGE BLAIR, B.D.

The Haunted Dominie
and Other Poems

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MR

The Haunted Dominic and Other Poems.

Dedicated (without permission)
to
"The Angel of the House."

"AFTER TWENTY YEARS."

THE light is softly soaking
Through the Summer-scented air;
But I think not of the sunlight,
For the glory of your hair.

The noonday sees the radiance
Of the hills with glad surprise;
But to me the noon is viewless,
For the love light in your eyes.

All riotous is evening
In red, and grey, and blue;
But its witchery is nothing
To the witchery of you.

The Haunted Dominic and Other Poems

PREFACE.

September, 1922.

Several of the poems have already appeared in print, and I acknowledge, with thanks, permission to include them from the Editors of the "Missionary Record," "People's Friend," the "Dollar Magazine," "College Echoes," etc.

For the illustration of "The Book Barrow" I am indebted to Mr. D. T. Rose, whose sketch it was that originally suggested the poem.

Very specially would I thank my good friend George Henderson, of Uddingston, not only for kindly criticism and encouragement, but for careful perusal of the MS. and invaluable assistance in preparing the poems for publication.

GEORGE BLAIR.

The Haunted Dominic and Other Poems

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
1. AFRICAN ECHOES.	
Rhodesia - - - - -	10
A Transkei Sabbath Morn - - - -	12
Hame Thoughts - - - - -	18
The Dying Kafir - - - - -	20
The Song of the Zambesi - - - -	22
A St. Andrews Message—1911 - - -	25
A St. Andrews Greeting—1913 - - -	27
A St. Andrews Greeting—1914 - - -	28
Voices of Evening - - - - -	29
A Heart in Exile - - - - -	30
The First Letter Home - - - - -	33
My Hills - - - - -	37
2. "WORKERS TOGETHER."	
The Cattleman - - - - -	40
The Souter - - - - -	42
"The Angel in the House" - - - -	45

The Haunted Dominie and Other Poems.

	PAGE
3. THE WAR.	
The Haunted Dominie - - - -	48
"Cauld Feet" - - - -	52
The Last Five Minutes - - - -	54
A 1914 Toast - - - -	56
Mater Dolorosa - - - -	58
The Sacramental World - - - -	60
4 MISCELLANEOUS.	
At a Second-hand Book-barrow - - -	62
"If Our Heart Condemn Us!" - - -	65
"If Our Heart Condemn Us Not!" - -	66
The Vanished Dream - - - -	67
Nature's Seeret - - - -	68
The Call - - - -	71
Homer, Iliad, 1 (34-52) - - - -	72
"Father Sturrock," Gymnast: In Me- morial - - - -	74
To a Dollar F.P. - - - -	75
Charles Murray, C.M.G. - - - -	78
The Other Side - - - -	80
Gloria in Rebus - - - -	82
In Memoriam - - - -	84

The Haunted Dominic and Other Poems.

	PAGE
5 SONGS.	
A Love Lilt - - - - -	85
Maid of Andreapolis - - - - -	87
6 STORIES FROM CHAUCER.	
Dedication to Richard Malcolm, Esq. - -	90
The Nuns' Priest's Tale - - - -	92
The Prioress' Tale - - - - -	99
The Knight's Tale - - - - -	105
The Pardoner's Tale - - - - -	125
The Man of Law's Tale - - - - -	118

The Haunted Dominic and Other Poems.

1. AFRICAN ECHOES.

The Haunted Dominic and Other Poems.

RHODESIA.

DEAR land of mystery and silent spaces,
What is the spell with which thou bindest me,
That fascination, which my soul embraces,
And makes me all thine own, a slave though free?

Is it the stately stillness of the morning,
The sun-splashed hills, bewildered by the hush,
The far-flung splendour of the evening, turning
Each common tree into a burning bush?

Is it the rush and riot of the river,
The tumbling tumult of its water-way,
The thunder of the Falls, that ceaseth never,
The sunless gorges, and the sunlit spray?

Is it the lone Matoppos, where he slumbers,
Dreamless, who dreamed a nation into name,
Sentry'd by granite hills in countless numbers,
Fit emblems of imperishable fame?

The Haunted Dominie and Other Poems.

Is it the old Zimbabwe, grim and hoary,
 Haunted by dreams of ages that are gone.
Brooding in silence on its untold story,
 A monumental mystery in stone?

Yes, all of these, and more. Thy spell is lying
 Upon my heart, as deep as love of kin;
Deep unto deep from thee to me is crying,
 The vast without unto the vast within.

A TRANSKEI SABBATH MORN.

Oot ower his hut the native haps,
Important in his Sabbath claes,
And doon the loan he briskly staps,
To jow the bell for Sabbath praise.

Sharp-set upon the mornin' air
The lownin' bell sounds oot its ca'
Across the histie veld and bare,
To kraals and kopjes far awa'.

Aroon' the wauknin' country peals
The echo o' the swingin' bell;
And up the dirlin' krantz it spiels,
And doon the darklin' kloof as well.

Low-croonin' to the spruit and vlei,
High-skirlin' to the rowtin' stirk,
It bids the native tak' his way
To worship at the Mission Kirk.

The Haunted Dominic and Other Poems.

Afar, frae howe and glen and crap,
The smoke comes curlin' blue and thin;
The Kafir wife maks mealie pap,
To feed her man and picinin.

Upon the stoep Umfundis' sits,
Sookin' his finely seasoned briar:
His yaird is blue wi' violets,
His orange trees a flame o' fire.

A hefty man, if something spare,
The friend o' a' the country-side.
Trader and native baith come there
To speir advice on time and tide.

He sees the blue o' breakfast reeks ;
He sees the Kafir leave the kraal,
The man, weel-found in coat and brecks,
The woman in her Sabbath shawl.

Neath ilka manly oxter lies
His book, that he may read therein.
Upon her back ilk mother ties
Her dusky, drowsy picinin.

The young men's clacs are a' aglow,
Like Joseph's colours in "The Book";
The maiden follows, keen to show
The killywimples in her dook.

The Haunted Dominie and Other Poems.

She hirples doon the hill in shune
Twa sizes sma'er than her feet
Unstockinged: for her dusky skin
Is a' the hose she's like to need.

And here and there amang the thrang,
His ochred blanket swinging free,
The "Red" comes stolidly alang
The strange indaba for to see.

Whiles bold outlined agen the lift,
Whiles in a donga lost to sicht,
Whiles plashin' barefit through the drift,
Whiles frae their claes the stour they dicht

So by the twistin' Kafir track,
Beat smooth by mony naked feet,
They dander doon—a motley pack—
And by the Kirk thegither meet.

Here, hunkered on the muckle stanes,
Or stretched at ease about the loanin',
They lauch and chatter, rax their banes,
And bide the Missionary's comin'.

And when he comes, they're a' erect,
With "Molo, baas!" that means, "Good morn!"
He chatters in their dialect,
As to the very manner born.

The Haunted Dominie and Other Poems.

The shauchled wife upon her staff,
The youngsters new come to the meetin',
The elders wi' their hertsome laugh,
They ane and a' get up to greet him.

Into the Kirk he maks the pace;
Into the Kirk the folk come tum'lin';
On seats and floor they tak' their place,
For handkerchiefs and pennies fum'lin'.

And then, wi' hoast, and jerk, and sob,
The solemn Kafir hymn arises:
The black precentor, prood o' 's job,
The first line kind o' improvises.

The rest look at him for a spell,
As speculatin' whaur he's leadin',
Syne a' join in wi' mighty swell,
Like hungry souls that cry for feedin'.

Through a' their sangs there ever rins
A queer, onchancy hert-break note,
That gars ye think upon your sins,
And sometimes grips ye by the throat.

The white man, when he comes alang,
Can mak' but little o' the meetin',
But often, when he hears the sang,
He swallows hard to keep frae greetin'.

The Haunted Dominic and Other Poems.

Then just aneth the pulpit stair,
The elders, twa, or maybe three,
Are keen enough to offer prayer,
Some upright, some on bended knee.

And so, wi' singings, ane or twa,
And readin' o' the Book forby,
The hour o' service wears awa',
Until the preacher taks his try.

He doesna bang the doors that stand
Open to men o' ilka part:
He doesna crush wi' ruthless hand
The hope that stangs the guilty heart.

It's just a frank and honest crack
About the straitness o' "the way,"
The offer made, and ne'er ta'en back,
The invitation, "Now's the day!"

Fu' cautiously he wyles his bait,
As ane wha kens a brother's need.
An elder nods his woolly pate,
To show he's thoroughly agreed.

And this ane hearkens open-mou'd;
And this ane shakes his head a wee;
And this ane sighs, and groans aloud;
And this ane sits and rubs his knee.

The Haunted Dominic and Other Poems.

But a' that hear what he has said
Rax oot, and tak', as in a dream,
A bite o' the Eternal Bread,
A drink o' the For-Ever Stream.

The sermon dune, the plates are passed,
Wi' muckle steer, and rowth o' hoastin',
While ilk ane ripes his pouches fast,
To settle which his tickie's lost in.

The diet past, they mak' for hame,
And hench awa' o'er kloof and watter;
In outward circumstance the same,
Within, their hearts are a' a-flutter.

The aloe glows upon the hill,
The Kafir-boem is flaming too;
'Mfundis' from his window-sill
Cries, "Proochie, leddy!" to his coo.

But to each heart from near and far,
A glory steals wi' sudden rush:
The flame that lit the Magi's star,
And ken'led Midian's Burning Bush.

And as they pass along the road,
By rocky seaur and cactus tree,
Their thoughts are with the Son of God,
That trod the hills of Galilee.

HAME THOUGHTS.

O it's fine to smoke your meerschäum in a corner o'
the stoep,

And watch the lazy oxen in the drift,
To see the sonsy Kafirs hotchin' hamewards in a group,
And the Southern Cross gae spielin' up the lift!
O it's fine to hear the crickets, when the nicht begins
to fa',

Chirpin' "Glory, Hallelujah!" for the dark!
But eh, my heart is nippin' for a land that's far awa';
I'm fain to hear the mavis and the lark.

O it's fine to soak in sunshine, and to birstle in the heat,
Aneth the skies o' never-ending blue:
To see the red hibiscus, and the moon-flower pale and
sweet,

And the Kafir-boem, and rowth o' ither hue!
But man, my heart is hungry for a wind that has an
edge,
That soughs amang the heather and the whin;
That birls the mist to sloken baith the forest and the
hedge,
Or dries the stannin' stooks for laedin' in.

The Haunted Dominic and Other Poems.

O the Buffalo is bonnie, when it sparkles in the licht,
And byous are the windings o' Nahoon;
And in a' the world is naething sae bewitching as the
sicht

O' veld and donga, sleeping 'neath the moon!
But only set me back again where crystal Devon rowes,
When a wastlin' wind is ringing the blue-bell,
Where the gowden gorse is growin' wi' the broom o'
Cowden Knowes,
Then keep Afric's sunny fountains to yoursel'.

THE DYING KAFIR.

I AM resting by the aloes, where the summer haze is
falling,

And the little lizards flicker out and in among the
stones;

With my blanket wrapped about me, for, though the
heat is crawling,

The coldness of the graveyard has come in among
my bones.

I can see the mealies greening down beside Kwelegga
River,

In little mealie patches, where the breezes sport and
roll:

Their leaves are ever shaking, and they whisper, and
they shiver;

And the shiver of the mealies has come in upon my
soul.

The Haunted Dominic and Other Poems.

Last night, when dark was falling, I could hear the
bull-frogs bellow

Their hoarse and baleful music, as they shouted for
the rain.

There was one upon the doorstep—a harsh and noisy
fellow—

Who had come to mock my tossing, and was jeering
at my pain.

Throughout the heavy darkness I could hear Kwelegha
feeling

Its course toward the dawning, as it hurried to the
sea;

And above its many voices I heard another, pealing;
And I shuddered, for I knew that Tikolosh' was call-
ing me.

O what shall then betide me, when Death shall fang
my shoulders,

And they plant the stones above me, beside
Kwelegha's wave?

O is there any waking from beneath that heap of
boulders?

O is there any dawn beyond the midnight of the
grave?

A SONG OF THE ZAMBESI.

WHEN you can land Leviathan upon a trouting fly,
Or bind with silken cords the jagged lightnings of the
sky ;

When you can tether to your door the gloomy thunder-
cloud,

Or catch among your fingers his reverberations loud ;
Then, then, but not till then

May the race of little men

Tell in language manufactured by the skill of tongue
or pen,

Half the " Glory, Hallelujah " of my scamper through
the glen.

Men ! Before a human being on my misty banks had
trod,

Or in ecstasy of terror cried aloud upon his God ;
Before my shouting echoes ever heard the Lion's roar,
Or troops of thirsty Behemoth came feeding by my
shore ;

I was leaping all alone,

From my pinnacles of stone,

Down into a sunless silence, where my thunder was a
moan,

Into unfrequented gorges, to a Kingdom of my own.

The Haunted Dominie and Other Poems.

O your Babylons and Ninevehs are children unto me,
And your old Zimbabwe ruin but a thing of yesterday!
For long before a city stood, or warrior trumpet brayed,
My watery legions thundered down their chasms, un-
afraid.

Older than the thirst for glory,
Old as Eden's tragic story,
Old as Nature with her tale of tooth and talon, grim
and gory:
Children of a day to me are Pyramid and Sphynxes
hoary.

I am brimming full of secrets that I gather as I go:
I can babble over mysteries no living mortals know:
I can track the many millions who, in restless days of
old,
Came swarming down my valleys to secure the
Temple's gold:

Mysteries of Ophir's walls,
Secret of Queen Sheba's halls,
Warrior raid, and Slaver gang, and ageless shame of
Kafir kraals,
I have shouted to the world in the thunder of my Falls.

The Haunted Dominic and Other Poems.

In homeless desolations, where the summer torrents
fall

And my stream is but a trickle, I can hear the Ocean
call.

Across a thousand weary miles, o'er veld and kopje
lone,

I feel the throbbing of his heart, I hear his pleading
tone.

And his wooing is to me

As the honey to the bee,

As the summer to the homing birds that north and
southward flee.

And my dreams along my waterway are ever of the Sea.

O the Sea is calling, calling, and I know I must away;
For his love is throbbing through me, and I hasten to
obey.

Past amphibious Barotsi, where the Makololo died,
Through the land where gallant Britons broke the
Matebele pride;

For, as needle turns to pole,

And to heaven the seeking soul,

As the eagle seeks the mountain; as the runner seeks
the goal;

So toward the calling Ocean all my wistful waters roll.

A ST. ANDREW'S MESSAGE.

To-day, o'er the mountain and over the heather,
From the dim mists and the moorlands of "Home,"
Visions and voices come stealing together,
Haunting the lands where in exile we roam.

Challenging all that is truest and best in us,
Seeking the fruits of a long-cherished vow,
Shaming the sin and the weakness confessed in us—
This be the answer we give to them now.

"Ye who have borne the heat and the toiling!
Ye, who have suffered the rain and the cold!
We, whom ye sheltered from sweat and from soiling,
Cannot forget how ye blest us of old.

"Hands, that were rough with the fighting ye fought
for us,
While we were bielded in comfort or play!
Down the long years come the victories ye bought
for us,
Sweetening, enriching the life of to-day.

The Haunted Dominic and Other Poems.

“ Feet that were weary in suffering pain for us,
Dear, patient feet on the rough country road!
Over the paths ye made easy and plain for us,
We too shall climb to the heights that ye trod.

“ Hearts, that in infinite tenderness prayed for us,
Sheltered our childhood, and gave us our name,
Gave us ideals! Oh be not afraid for us!
Ye showed us how; and we’re ‘ playing the game.’ ”

The Haunted Dominie and Other Poems.

A ST. ANDREW'S GREETING.

(From East London Caledonian Society, South Africa).

HERE, Scotland's sons, wha swat and grill,
Frae Cape Town up to Broken Hill;
Ye, wha hae made a pile o' riches;
And ye, wha howk in sheughs and ditches!
It's no oor guid advice we're sendin',
We've a' got bauchles needin' mendin';
It's jist a hand-grip frae a brither
To a' wha wear the sprig o' heather.
We mayna gree a jot or quota
Wi' Oom Hertzog, nor yet wi' Botha;
But here, at least, I's lay my luggies,
We're a' agreed aboot the HAGGIS.

The Haunted Dominic and Other Poems.

A ST. ANDREW'S GREETING, 1914.

FRAE armoured truck and howkit trench,
Wi' Botha, Jellicoe, and French,
Whaur barkin' cannon spue their drench
 O' deadly soakin',
Far frae the loom, the kirk, the bench,
 We send this token.

Though unco slow to turn and hit,
Though sweer to use the nieve or fit.
There comes a time when we maun dae't,
 Or dowse the taper:
And so we're oot to do our bit,
 For scrap o' paper.

We'll do it too, ye may be sure:
We'll on, till victory croon the 'oor,
For Mother Country's nicht and poo'er;
 We'll dae't to please her:
We'll gaur the Germans flee like stour,
 And hang the Kaiser.

VOICES OF EVENING.

SPLASHES of glory out west,
Where the sun in his bath is steeping;
And eastwards, over the veld,
The shadows of night are creeping.

Softly the wandering breeze
The leaves of the blue-gum is stirring;
And in the bush and grass
The viewless cricket is whirring.

Furtively hastening home,
The timid Kafir is quaking.
Down by the riverside
The mealies with laughter are shaking.

Far on the dark hillside
The Kafir fires are dancing,
And round them, with clapping of hands,
The Kafir is leaping and prancing.

Out of the mist by the ford
Comes the sound of water, falling;
And in the plash of the stream
The voice of 'Tikolosh' calling.

A HEART IN EXILE.

THE Christmas bee, hid in the firs,
Sings tensely to the summer sun;
The elusive cricket chirps, and whirrs,
You mark his place, and he is gone:
The bull frogs make the night to ache
With melody from where they hide;
But my heart minds the corneraik
That rasps and runs on Devonside.

Towards the Drakensberg the night
Creeps slowly from the drowsy west,
Splashing its glory left and right
O'er krantz and kopje lulled to rest.
A thousand colours gleam and fail;
The veld with glooming silence fills;
But in my heart I hear the gale
That blusters white on Ochil hills.

The Haunted Dominic and Other Poems.

Across the veld, when summer tears
Have fallen in sweet refreshing showers,
The listening ear in wonder hears
The stream that down the donga pours:
It fills the land with pleasant falls,
Makes barren fields to fertile turn;
But still my hungry heart recalls
The homely croon of Dollar burn.

In silent reaches of the stream
I yet can see the hippo drink,
The slimy creatures dart and gleam
In sport, and into stillness sink.
Although I never may forget
Those memories of snout and fin,
A fairer vision haunts me yet—
The leaping trout in Siller Linn.

The wild mimosa scents the air;
With fragrance sweet the senses fill;
The aloe's danger signals flare
Adown the rocks that guard the hill;
Though wistful tropic colours crown
The waving plain and frowning pass,
My heart is with the heather brown,
The gowans, and the quaking grass.

The Haunted Dominic and Other Poems.

A brooding peace is o'er the day;
With scented shadows night is full;
Unrest and silence fade away
Into the vacant spaces cool.
A fairer land you may not find,
Though far your wandering feet may roam;
Yet sure as creatures seek their kind,
The human heart will long for home.

THE LOON'S FIRST LETTER HOME.

DEAR friends, in Scotland far away,
The mail for home goes off to-day.
So I will write you, if I may.

And should it seem that I'm a bit
Conceited in the things I've writ,
Please do not go and credit it.

For I can but repeat in play
The things that Dad and Mammy say
Concerning me from day to day.

My head, for instance, they declare
That God has spilt the sunbeams there
To play at "Cooey" in my hair.

My eyes, that love their lustre drew
From out the Indian Ocean blue
That heaves and moves from me to you.

The Haunted Dominic and Other Poems.

And for their sparkle, I heard say
An Angel bathed them one bright day
With essence of the Milky Way.

My hands—I tell it to my grief—
They say, 'tis their assured belief
That they were made by Young Mischief;

For, spite of me, my hands will rove
Into each sacred treasure-trove
Where little hands should never move

So, if I play upon the floor,
Newspapers, toys, and reels galore
Lie scattered there from door to door.

My smile, they said that this had come
While I was sitting wonder-dumb,
Listening to Golden Harps at Home.

And, when the house with laughter thrills,
Dad says I got it in the hills
From heather bells and rippling rills.

The winds among the fir trees springing,
The Scottish blue bells softly ringing,
Gave me a voice to do my singing.

The Haunted Dominic and Other Poems

They say that once my sixteen teeth,
White as the snow on Hill of Beith,
Were pearls in the River Teith.

'Tis just a year ago to-day,
I heard my Dad and Mammy say,
Since from Dunblane we came away.

And you can guess that I since then
Have changed, as well as older men,
For I can toddle but and ben;

And I can speak a word or two—
Real words, you know, not just “Goo-goo!”
Which any baby girl could do.

But hark, I hear my Mammy's tread,
She's come to “roosh” me, heel and head,
And put me cosily to bed.

I'd rather write a little more,
But she is waiting at the door,
O deary, deary! bed's a bore.

Yet, 'tis a manly thing, they say,
To bow before the Destiny
You can't escape or turn away.

The Haunted Dominie and Other Poems.

So, may the Angels, bringing sleep
Where heavy little eyelids peep,
Your souls and mine in safety keep.

Perhaps, in answer to a prayer,
Some other time, some other where,
You'll hear from Lyon Ramsay Blair.

MY HILLS.

THERE are nae hills like my hills,
 Though east and wast ye gang;
There are nae rills like my rills,
 Singing their seaward sang.
The hills are grand, the streams are fair
 In lands ayont the faem;

But there are none that can compare
 Wi' the braw hills o' hame.
O set me back Glenshirrup way,
 And gie 's the gawd and creel;
Or let me hear, ayont Glenquay,
 The birlin' o' the reel;

Then I forget the roar and rush
 O' motors, mills, and men,
And hear, aback o' Nature's hush,
 The voices o' the glen.

The Haunted Dominie and Other Poems.

When you're oxter-deep in bracken,
And your hazert claes are cauld,
What does 't matter, if they're takin'
And the day is no that auld!
There's a muckle, spreckled moucher
Ower fornenst yon tilly-nap,
Gin ye brog him wi' the butcher,
Ye'll be keepit on the hap.

Whaur the foggy bees are bummin'
On the braes abune the haugh;
Whaur the sherpin' stanes are drummin'
On the scythe blades, auld and bauch;
Whaur the mountain thyme and myrtle
Scent the fresh and caller air;
Whaur the white mist draps her kirtle
On the hillside—set me there.

The Haunted Dominic and Other Poems.

2. "WORKER'S TOGETHER."

THE CATTLEMAN.

THEY say that mine's a clarty job,
To muck the byres, and meat the bease,
And mend an orra pailin'-stob
The knowt hae tummelt frae its place.

To tramp the fields frae morn till nicht
In search o' ootler stot or quey,
Through peltin' rain that blinds the sicht,
Through sheughs o' glaur and yellow cley.

And then, come March, when a' the yowes
Are roupy wi' the winter's hoast,
To scatter neeps amang the howes,
Wi' fingers dinlin' wi' the frost.

But though I'm keepit byous thrang
Wi' muck-rake and wi' graip forby,
Yet in my darg I lilt a sang,
And in the dubs I see the sky.

The Haunted Dominic and Other Poems.

For a' my wark is like His ain,
Wha aims at perfectin' the breed
O' sheep and kye, as weel as men,
Wi' rowth o' care and halesome feed.

Sae, as I mix their cake and bran,
Or neeps and hay for winter stored,
There's whiles I ca' the cattleman
A fellow-worker wi' the Lord.

THE SOUTER.

It's sixty year, come Martinmas, since first I sattled
doon

Upon the clootin'-stool whar noo I sit,
Apprenticed to a Souter, who could mak' the buits
and shoon

His sign declared were "guaranteed to fit."

Since syne I've seen this clachan happit ower and ower
again,

The youngsters keen to leave and spread their wings,
And the feck o' my auld cronies they ha'e slippit awa'
ben

To that laich hoose whar nae alarum rings.

But I'se warrant that their roads were a' the easier
to gang,

Their hills were a' the easier to spiel,
Since for sixty solid winters I ha'e helpit them along
By stiekin' to my last, and workin' weel.

The Haunted Dominie and Other Poems.

There's some that skimp the hammerin' upon the
hobbin'-feet,

A spurdie-pick, and then a flee awa';

They fit their customers wi' shoon like sponges in the
weet,

Or buits like fozy neeps amang the snaw.

I ne'er could haud wi' scampin'; for it surely isna' richt
To grudge the wark ye do wi' sole and heel;

Whate'er you find to do, you'd better do wi' a' your
micht;

What's worth the doin' 's worth the doin' weel.

It's a fikey job the Souter's, as he fixes up his cast,
To mak' or mend exactly as he's telt;

Your fingers maun be denty frae the fittin' on the last
Till ye rin plum-jordan roond about the welt.

Gin your ensel should be blunted, ye may be an angry
man,

But it's elbow-grease you're needin' for the cloot;
Gin your roset-ends get fankled, when you're steikin'
on the ran,

It's only patience that'll sort them oot.

The Haunted Dominie and Other Poems.

Guid kens I ne'er was kirky; yet I'd fain believe I
serve

The Maister wi' my lingels and my brat;
Fowk's gaun out and comin' in He's promised to
preserve,

And that's the very job I'm workin' at.

Sae, when the summons comes to me to pack my ends
and awls,

And be carried to the kirkyaird on the muir,
I will lippen till His mercy, wha can patch a' tattered
sauls,

And mend auld bauchles labelled "past repair."

THE ANGEL IN THE HOUSE.

IN ancient times, so runs the tale,
An Angel from the heights did come,
And, girt with scrubbing brush and pail,
Made Eden in a humble home.

And as she moved, with busy tread,
About the dear old homely place,
An aureole clung round her head,
And filled the house with nameless grace.

In ancient times,—and yet to-day,
Where'er my busy housewife turns,
I see the Angel on the way,
Whose path with loving radiance burns

And when she moves within my sight,
Across the sun-path on the stair,
Or sews by gleam of candle-light,
I see the halo round her hair.

The Haunted Dominic and Other Poems.

And when at night she bends her head
Above each little sleeping child
To smooth the pillows of each bed,
It seems as if the Virgin smiled.

And in her service all day through,
I think upon the Holy Name,
“ Not to be ministered unto,
But all to minister,” He came.

The Haunted Dominic and Other Poems.

3. THE WAR.

The Haunted Dominie and Other Poems.

THE HAUNTED DOMINIE.

THE bairns are tired and restless, and the schuleroom's
a' a-hum;

I'm sick mysel' o' history and dates;
I see their lips and fingers busy figuring the sum,
I hear their pencils scartin' on the slates.

They are busy wi' their countin'; I can leave them
for a wee,

The last half-'oor or sae afore they skail;
And though some o' them are dreamin', as I canna
choose but see,

I am seein' dreams and visions for mysel'.

Sittin' up afore my desk on the high three-leggit stool,
I am watching no the bairns there at work;
It's the laddies I am seein' wha ha'e lately left the
school

And are gane to meet the German and the Turk.

To their places on the benches I can see them
shachle in,

Wi' furtive mirth and mischief in their gait,
Wi' orra nips and scratches, and wi' kicks upon the
shin,

As they settle doon to copy-book and slate.

The Haunted Dominie and Other Poems.

Guid kens they were a worry wi' their plaiskies and
their steer,

I ha'e skulted them and leathered them fu' sair;
Yet I'd gi'e my hopes o' pension could I only ha'e
them here,

And could watch their cheery caiperin' aince mair.

There was Geordie Sharp, a laddie wi' a pooch aye fu'
o' bools,

Wha'd never heed a single word I'd say,
Wha could never maister grammer, nor mind the
parsin' rules,
And wad sell his soul for shinty ony day.

But he made a gallant soldier,—so at least the Colonel
said,

When he wrote to tell his mother he was killed;
He was cheerin' on his fellows, when a sniper laid
him dead,

But they carried back his body frae the field.

And there was Tammie Taylor, too, a thoctfu' little
chap,

Wha's coontin' was the pride o' a' the schule;
The Germans got his section somehoo kep'd intil a
trap,

And Tam was made a prisoner,—is ane still.

The Haunted Dominic and Other Poems.

And Sandy Duff, a rascal just as cunnin' as a tod,
For every kind o' mischief he was ripe;
He wad keep the ithers at it wi' a passin' wink or nod,
But he'd stand a mighty lickin' ere he'd clipe.

In the ancient Chersonesus, just fornenst the gates o'
Troy,

Among Australia's miracles o' men,
Lauchin' at the roarin' death, as gin it were a ploy,
Young Duff gaed doon, and never rose again.

And Geordie Fyfe,—a sodger frae his very nither's
knee—

Wha's neives were doobled aince or twice a week,
Wha's een were often blaekened, wha aince tried it on
wi' me,

Doesna ha'e his scraps and scartins noo to seek;

For he's actin' as a Sergeant in the Scottish Fusiliers,
Whaur he gets his fill o' fechtin' ony day;
Whaur wi' his gun and bayonet he can work aff his
arrears

Upon his country's foemen in the fray.

Just ower there by the blackboard Jimmie Rogan used
to sit,

A strait-limbed lad as ever took the e'e;
Noo he's hirplin' on his crutches wi' a splinter in his fit,
A broken man for a' the years to be.

The Haunted Dominie and Other Poems.

And there was my ain Alec too, a lad o' mony a pairt,
Wha at College led in Greek and Latin baith;
Wha never gar'd me blush for him, nor suffer a sair
hert,

Till I got the wire that tel't me o' his death.

" A gallant officer! " they said, and weel I ken 'twas
true;

His men wad follow ony gait he led;
But it's gey and weary waitin': I feel auld and duno
the noo,

As I see his sunny face among the dead.

And there's a curran ithers who were schuled among
us here,

Wha rushed to war like beaters to the hunt;
The lads were keen on fechtin', and had little troke
wi' fear,

And needed nae press-gangin' for the Front.

And some o' them are sleepin' aneth Flanders' bloody
sod,

And some in Syrian sands ha'e found a bier;
But I'll meet my laddies sometime, when the registers
o' God

Bid the maister and his pupils answer " Here! "

CAULD FEET.

O' a' the ills ye tak' the toll,
The bully-beef, the want o' coal,
The daylight in your stocking-sole,
The trenches weet;
'There's nane you'll find sae ill to thole
As jist cauld feet.

If e'er you're trampin' up the line
Your leefu' lane, and hear the whine
O' German shell come doon the win',
Ye may be bauld,
But though your hert be duntin' fine
Your feet are cauld.

The sentry, on the step, will dicht
His drowsy e'e at dead o' nicht;
A rottan, rattlin' oot o' sicht,
Soaks him wi' heat
Frae head to heel, frae left to richt,
Except his feet.

The Haunted Dominic and Other Poems.

When huddled in the trench you sit,
Afore ye spiel the parapet,
To hit, or maybe to be hit
By deadly sleet,
Your language may be warm a bit,
But no' your feet.

If e'er you see a neighbour chap
Gae spinnin' like a dozin' tap,
Syne to the yird a' lifeless drap,
Thowless and auld,
The red-hot death that on him lap,
Leaves your feet cauld.

If, when you leave the trenches hale,
And thinkin' on the lang, lang trail,
Fritz starts to pepper you wi' shell,
You're clean appalled;
You wadna jist say feared; but, well—
Your feet are cauld.

THE LAST FIVE MINUTES.

AHINT the lines our muckle guns are bouffin';
Ahead, the dawn is creepin' up the lift;
And in the trench the Hielanders are houffin'
Like shelties, scougin' in the Norlan' drift.

For zero's timed exactly for three-fifty,
When we gang ower to lead the big attack;
And mony a lad, that stands sac stracht and hefty,
Will cross the parapet and ne'er come back.

Upon his watch the Captain gazes steady,
Then shuts the dial, thochtfu'-like, and slow,
"The last five minutes, boys," he says. "Be ready
To follow me whenever I say "Go!"

"The last five minutes!" Aye, by barbèd fences,
And by the shell-holes whaur the dead ha'e lain,
And by the whustlin' lead frae German trenches
The last five minutes comes for mony a ane.

"The last five minutes!" Faith, whate'er may
happen,
I weel believe I'm man enough to thole,
Yet wad I liefer at the schule be scrappin'
Wi' ceps and sticks at Leeropt's sandy hole.

The Haunted Dominie and Other Poems.

I'd rather fecht wi bailies on the Allan,
Or codd the keepers round about Strathyre,
Or face the neives o' ony plooman callan',
Than charge into that cataract o' fire.

I wish I hadna been sae sweer to hearken
To a' the guid advice the auld folks gie'd.
I ettled weel enough; but lads and larkin'
Gar saws and sermons baith to rin to seed.

I mind the prayer my mother used to hear me,
Afore I snuggled doon to sleep at nicht,
And speired the "Tender Shepherd" to be near me,
And watch me even on till mornin' licht.

Sae, Tender Shepherd, mind a wee yin's yappin',
And dinna be ower hard upon my sin;
And, gin Ye find me, at the Big Yett, chappin',
Jist draw the gowden sneck, and let me in!

A 1914 TOAST.

COME here, my lads, I'll give a toast
To which you'll all incline :
" The men who led our fighting force,
In the days of Auld Lang Syne."

First, here's to George, our Sailor King,
Whom all our hearts enshrine :
We'll up and fight for him, like those
Who fought in Auld Lang Syne.

And here's to jolly Jellicoe,
The admiral of the line,
Whose " hearts of oak " still sweep the seas,
As in days of Auld Lang Syne.

And here's a health to Kitchener,
Who heard the shrapnel whine,
From Khartoum on to Elandslaught,
In the days of Auld Lang Syne.

And here's to French and Haig, who're off
To smash " Die Wacht am Rhine,"
And bring the tyrant to his knees,
As in days of Auld Lang Syne.

The Haunted Dominie and Other Poems.

And here's to all the men who march
With your brave sons and mine;
The country's heart is with its lads,
As oft in Auld Lang Syne.

Bonne santé à nos alliés,
De Bruxelles à la Seine.
Marchons, soldats, Nous allons vainere,
Comme aux journées d'Auld Lang Syne.

Ons Louis Botha singen wij,
Met burghers groot en klein.
Tezamen nu wij vechten al
Voor de dagen Auld Lang Syne.

So 'by their will, and at their word,
Our forces will combine
For God, and King, and Native Land,
And the days of Auld Lang Syne.

CHORUS.

For Auld Lang Syne, my lads,
For Auld Lang Syne,
We'll tak' our guns and march away
As we did in Auld Lang Syne.

MATER DOLOROSA.

Was ever wistful mother
More humbly proud than I,
When all the three went fighting
By land, the sea, and sky!

But when the dark days gathered
Their toll along the Line,
Had ever anguish'd mother
A sadder heart than mine!

For though the three were fated
To lose the lives they gave,
My heart can only cherish
A solitary grave.

Dear beyond all telling
Is that one grave in the sod;
But where the others slumber,
Is only known to God.

Jim was the ace of his Squadron,
Killed in the clouds was he;
Joe sank in the "Aboukir"
To the bottom of the sea.

The Haunted Dominie and Other Poems.

Jack, my youngest and fairest,
 Brimful of fun and mirth—
Jack was the only one of the three
 That was decently laid in the earth.

But I am content to leave them
 Safe gathered to the Lord;
For all the three are at rest with Him
 According to His word.

For " the clouds are His pavilion,"
 And the " earth His footstool " grand,
And the bottom of the ocean
 Is " the hollow of His hand."

And Jim in His pavilion
 Will be resting soft and sweet;
And Joe, upon His footstool,
 Will be at the Master's feet.

And Jack will sure be sleeping
 In the place the Master plann'd,
When he cuddles down to slumber
 In the hollow of His hand.

And though oft my heart is wistful,
 As I mourn their young lives spent;
Yet I think of them in their places,
 And I am well content.

THE SACRAMENTAL WORLD.

THIS is the will and testament

Of dead men not a few :

“ The whole of life is a Sacrament,
Since we have died for you !

“ When ye eat, in your sheltered safety,
Or curse your tasteless bread ;
Remember that is our body,
Which was broken in your stead.

“ For we piled our broken bodies
Where else your own had been ;
And our blood was spilt like water
By the cruel submarine.

“ All the liberties ye cherish,
And the peace that ye deem so good,
And your dreamless sleep in a cosy bed,
Were purchased with our blood.

“ So life is Sacramental,
Since we died, fighting thus ;
And its liberties are holy things
In memory of us.”

The Haunted Dominic and Other Poems.

4. MISCELLANEOUS.

AT A SECOND-HAND BOOK BARROW.

No self-important sparrow
E'er half so pertly stands
As he who owns the barrow
And all its learned brands.
He sees men fetch and carry,
Sees Tom, and Dick, and Harry
Approach, and gaze, and tarry,
And dig among his sands.

Within the learned Barrow
Are treasures of the East;
Are tales that please, or harrow
The greatest and the least;
The Wisdom of the Sages,
The Problem of the Ages,
The Book, whose fairy pages
Hold "Beauty and the Beast."

The Haunted Dominie and Other Poems.

The boy, with strange persistence,
Is foremost of the throng;
The maiden from a distance
Looks wistfully and long.
There dignity and labour,
There also friend and neighbour
Come hunting for his favour,
And search his books among

With Barmecide at table
The beggar takes his stand;
And on the Tower of Babel
The sailor's in command
The poet spends his leisure
On Pegasus for pleasure;
While Ali Baba's treasure
Awaits the explorer's hand.

The youngster swings with Tarzan
Among the woods and hills;
The impecunious parson
Forgets his unpaid bills;
The scholar finds the way to
The living heart of Plato,
And cares not one potato
For aught of human ills.

The Haunted Dominic and Other Poems.

But he who owns the treasure
In black, and red, and green,
Thinks only of the measure
Of what it brings him in
In twopence, threepence, fourpence ;
But for its fragrant incense
Of wit, and sense, and nonsense,
He does not care a bean.

IF OUR HEART CONDEMN US.

THE accusing finger points, and stays
Before my haggard face and wan;
The voice of the Accuser says,
In prophet tones, "Thou art the man!"

Then all that day I feel me one
With all mean things that creep, and crawl;
With all that skulk, and cringe, and shun
The straight look and heroic call.

Then every tree, as I go by,
Shouts to its birds, "Behold, and see!"
And all the day is one round eye
That stares, and stares, and stares at me.

I meet my friends with lowered eyes,
Nor dear their words, nor sweet their pelf;
For there are none who can despise
My meanness as I do myself.

With furtive face and leaden heart
I note the passing of the day;
And feel these hands of mine had part
In nailing Christ on Calvary.

IF OUR HEART CONDEMN US NOT.

WITH fearless face and eager heart
I rise to greet the clamant day,
To undertake a helper's part
At work or play.

And on the common pathways then
I move triumphantly along;
A man among my fellow-men,
All life a song.

Then am I one with all swift things
That leap and bound among the dew;
One with the bird that soars and sings
Into the blue.

And every common thing around,
The earth beneath, the sky above,
Reveal, in vision and in sound,
A Father's love.

THE VANISHED DREAM.

HE parted with his dream; not all at once,
As one made bankrupt by a sudden crash,
But by degrees th' illusions took their leave
Amid the days' perplexities and clash.

By small unfaithfulnesses here and there;
By mild flirtations with unrighteousness;
By little treasons to his better self,
The "vision splendid" grew to less and less.

So here a little, there a little too,
He gradually ceased to be the host
Of Godlike dreams; and all the wealth he made
Could ne'er repay him for the thing he lost.

NATURE'S SECRET.

COULD the winds disclose the secrets, or the stars
 reveal the sights,
That are overheard or witnessed through the days and
 through the nights,
While the stars perform their wheeling and the winds
 distil their rain,
Would the pleasure of the stories be the greater, or
 the pain?

Are the winds a sigh of sorrow that the soul of Nature
 heaves?
Is there querulous complaining in the rustle of the
 leaves?
Are the stars but crystal tear-drops, wept in ages long
 ago,
When the old Creation wondered at the young
 Creation's woe?

Is there music in the ocean when it plunges on the
 shore?
Does the sun look sadly backward when its shining day
 is o'er?

The Haunted Dominie and Other Poems.

When the mountains blush in heather and the meadows
weep in rills,
Are they shamed of human evils, are they mourning
human ills?

Nay, we may not read the secret of the wind, or star,
or sea,
Till we find a deeper meaning than at first appears
to be;
Till we dip beneath the surface, till we give an earnest
heed,
For the message, though 'tis simple, yet not all who
run may read.

It is only when the wind is feeble that it seems to sigh;
It is only flickering stars that look like tear-drops in
the sky;
It is only when the wind is half in anger, half in play,
That it seems a moaning echo from the bosom of the
day.

When the wind from off the mountain top is blowing
clear and strong,
It is like the joyous note of triumph in a victor's song
Like a martial pæan sounding, stirring in the warrior's
breast
Hopes of victory and conquest, is its mood of strong
unrest.

The Haunted Dominic and Other Poems.

When the stars are shining brightly, making night a
younger day,
They are, like the old notation of the music, gone
astray
From an Angel's song-book; music falling in a silver
shower
Where the weary earth is sleeping in her space-enfolded
bower.

When the wind is faintly blowing there is sadness in
its tone;
When the sea is calling faintly, then its voice seems
one low moan;
But the stronger sea is gladness, and the louder wind
is song;
And the fuller stars are music that the Angel Choirs
prolong.

And when faith is only feeble, then the life behind is
dull;
It is only when the faith is strong and love to Christ
is full,
When the heart is full-surrendered, and the life is
wholly His,
That the soul of man is brimming o'er with joy of
raptured bliss.

THE CALL.

As the stream among the mountains
Hears the calling of the sea,
Rushes from its lonely fountains
To fulfil its destiny;
Dashes headlong from its fastness
Over rock, and fern, and moor,
To rejoin the heaving vastness
Whence its waters came before.
As the summer-loving swallow,
Sailing 'neath a tropic sky,
Hears a voice that bids her follow
To the North-Land far away;
Follows o'er the untracked distance
With unerring, tireless wing;
For the call brooks no resistance—
'Tis the call of coming Spring.
So I feel my loved one calling
Over miles of land and sea;
In my heart her accents, falling,
Whisper, " Sweetheart, come to me! "
And I come, for all my being
Sets toward the heart I love,
As the swallow in its flying,
As the streamlet from above.

The Haunted Domīnie and Other Poems.

HOMER, ILIAD, 1: 34-52.

'LONG the shore he strode in silence of the deep re-
sounding tide,
And departing, to Apollo much and oft the old man
prayed:
“ Hear, the Silver Bow who bearest, and who Chryses
dost protect,
Sacred Cilla, and who rulest over Tenedos in might;
Now, if e'er to thee, O Smintheus, I have roofed a
Temple o'er,
Which hath pleased thee, or have burned on thine
altar's sacred floor
Slices rich, cut from the offerings of the thighs of goat
or bull,
Grant that thou to me would'st listen, let thy
vengeance now be full;
Let thy shafts unerring, Smintheus, with destructive
force be sped,
Till the Greeks repent them dearly for the tears which
I have shed.”
Thus he spake, with rev'rend countenance, then
Phæbus Apollo heard,
From the heights of high Olympus he descended, wrath
in heart,

The Haunted Dominie and Other Poems.

Shouldered was his bow, close-covered, with his arrows
on his back,
Clanging arrows on his shoulders, as he strode in pas-
sion black;
Far from all the Greeks he halted, and an arrow 'mong
them threw;
Terrible for mortals was the clanging of the Silver Bow.
First, against the beasts of burden went the avenging
arrows great,
And the coursing dogs; but soon he, shooting, fired his
arrows straight
At the sinful Greeks; at once they, pierced, fall on
every side,
And for all who thus were smitten funeral pyres were
ever piled.

IN MEMORY OF
"FATHER" STURROCK, GYMNAST.

No more, with muscles held in tense command,
He'll flash around the horizontal bar;
Nor ride the trapeze, like a shooting star,
Nor on the parallels, long-balanced, stand.
No more shall groups of happy youths, inspanned
With sword, and glove, and foil, for mimic war,
Before him learn to thrust, and lunge, and spar,
Obedient to the signal of his hand.
Beyond the outmost ring of stars he's swung,
And climbed, exulting in unfettered powers,
Above the Golden Ladder's topmost rung,
To stand before a higher bar than ours,
All undismayed; and hear, in hearty tone,
The Judge of all good sports declare, "Well done!"

TO A DOLLAR F.P.

SAY, do you mind the sunny days,
When ower the hills we'd gang,
Rowin'-chowin' doon the braes,
And a' the world was sang!

The lang brig at the Bleachfield Mill,
Upon the Dollar road;
The Rackmill woods, whar, frae the schule,
We played at " hunt the tod "!

The briestwark o' the lang stane dam
Abune the channel coup,
The salmon-ladder, whar we cam'
To watch the salmon loup!

And do ye mind the Earl's Brig,
And the lang ditch ablow;
The gowk-spit, growin' till a clig
Gin we'd but let it grow!

The paper-chases roond the crags,
And yont to the Muir Mill;
And how we ran to Gushie Hags,
And back to Galla Hill!

The Haunted Dominie and Other Poems.

Or how at Vicar's Brig we'd trace
The Dean's memorial;
Or spielin' doon the rocky face
We'd drink the iron wal!

And how we listened, solemn-still,
To hear the frichtsome din—
The clatter o' the Devil's Mill,
The roar o' Caldron Linn!

Or do you mind the eerie hush
Aroond the Witches' Loan,
Whar arching tree and holly bush
Made twilight at the noon!

The quiet reaches o' Glenquay;
The burn that jinked aboot,
Whaur mony a bonnie summer's day
We cam to fish for troot!

A deal o' watter 's passed the Brig
Sin we stood there, we twa;
And lads and lassies, young and trig,
Are married and awa'.

The Haunted Dominie and Other Poems.

Nae mair we swing upon the yett,
Nor shoogie 'neath the trees;
But do you think we'll e'er forget
The sunshine and the breeze?

Although nae mair in winter time
Dead Watter sees our face,
Can we forget the frost, the rime,
The shinty, and the race?

Though never noo we play at ba',
Or "Airlie ower the road,"
We're better souls, I guess, we twa,
For the blythe ways we trod.

And richer spirits too, I guess,
In spite o' lack o' gold;
For clean and cantie memories
Are neither bocht nor sold.

The Haunted Dominie and Other Poems.

TO CHARLES MURRAY,
AUTHOR OF "HAMEWITH," ON BEING
CREATED C.M.G.

GREAT Chieftain o' the singing lads,
We're unco proud to see
The King has thocht it worth his while
To call you C.M.G.

And little wonder! For you sing
Wi' clear and tunefu' notes,
Whaur we, whene'er we try to bum,
Are roupie in our throats.

Whaur you're astride o' Pegasus,
Or sheltie o' his breed,
Our nags are spayin'd, auld, and dune,
And maistly ringle-ee'd.

Whaur you gang dancin' doon the road,
As blythe as ony lintie,
We pech alang, wi' clattering clogs,
And raise the stour ahint ye.

The Haunted Dominic and Other Poems.

The rhymes come ringin' to your nod,
A' pridefu' to be chosen,
Whaur we've to hunt and howk about
'Mang phrases sweer, and dozin'.

Whaur you gang skelpin' up the lift,
And in the sunshine birstle,
We stagger "hamewith," weel content
Roond ingleside to hirstle.

For a' the happy sangs you've sung
There's nane but is your debtor;
And for the honour done the Chief,
We feel oursels the better.

THE OTHER SIDE.

TO A FRIEND WHO DESCRIBED GOLF AS HEAVENLY.

MAN, Tom, whan I was drivin' wild,
And liftin' turf instead o' ba,
"Heavens" maybe was the word I cried,
But no' the place I meant ava.

Yestreen, whan wi' the ither twa
Adoon the course I took the gait,
I couldna hit a single ba',
And girr'd agin the thraws o' fate.

Like Adam, much I delved the land,
And potted mony feckless shots;
And whiles "drave heavily" in sand,
Like Pharaoh's bunkered chariots.

Like Moses, whiles I struck the rock;
On ilk green waur than ither fared;
Gie'd Harry Vardon's rules a shock,
And gie'd the winds the scorin' caird.

The Haunted Dominic and Other Poems.

Aince, whan I laid the ba' hole-high,
Sure o' the putt—nae fear o' missin'—
My neighbour played; and there was I,
Like Esau, stimied o' the blessin'.

EPILOGUE.

I sometimes hold it half a sin
To miss a golf ball with a cleek,
Because, although I never speak,
I always hold the thought within.

GLORIA IN REBUS.

Not on the white Emmaus road,
A Sabbath journey from the town,
Not only there, O Man of God,
We sense the rustle of Thy gown.
But where the common pathways twine,
'Mong smoke of toil, or dust of mart,
We see transfigured garments shine,
And feel the pulse of burning heart.

Not by Gennesaret alone,
Thy feet have trod the water's crest;
Or wavelets, into passion thrown,
Beat at the doorway of Thy rest;
But where the syrens wake the days,
And shout to all the countryside,
We meet Thee, by the banks and braes
Of silver Tay, or Forth, or Clyde.

The Haunted Dominic and Other Poems.

Not only in the Upper Room

Thou speakest peace to weary men;
Nor in the calm of Mary's home

Bidd'st drooping spirits lift again;
But in our humble dwellings still,

Where two or three are bowed in prayer,
Or little children romp and shrill,

Thou standest there! Thou standest there!

Nay, not alone on Olivet

Thy face transfigured may we see;
Or feel the daylight throbbing yet

With heavenly visitants, and Thee;
But in the faces that we know,

And in the selfless sacrifice,
And kindly doings here below

We see Thy face; we hear Thy voice.

Not only by the bitter Rood,

With aching wounds that flow amain,
We feel the virtue of Thy blood,

Or draw our peace from out Thy pain;
But in the rush of busy day,

Or in temptation sharp and sore,
We still may see Thee come, and say,
"Go on thy way, and sin no more!"

IN MEMORIAM.

TO-DAY, within the Holy House of God,
We did unveil, with reverence and pride,
Our tribute to the memory of those
Who fought our fights, and fighting for us, died.

And for a while, dear God! it seemed to me,
The dead came trooping back to life again;
And moved among us, as we read their names,
And laid a healing hand upon our pain.

I felt the loving arms about me twine,
And fragrant breath was soft upon my cheek;
Young, fearless eyes were laughing into mine,
And roguish lips my ready lips did seek.

A hero's heart beat at my aching breast:
God! how the empty years went clean away,
Like a forgotten dream of night's unrest
That flies before the rapiers of day.

And though they left us, when the bugle shrilled
The long "Last Post" into the listening air,
The fragrance tarried, and our hearts were filled
With quiet content, because we met them there.

RYEHILL, 27th June, 1920.

5. SONGS.

SONG.

THE mavis, liltin' frae the wood,
The swallow, twittering to her brood,
The lark, that aiblins aye I lo'ed,
They speak to me o' thee, love,
They speak to me o' thee.

When through the glades at morn I gang,
I hear the birdies sing their sang,
The bushes and the trees amang;
They sing to me o' thee, love,
They sing to me o' thee.

When winter's angry sough and blaw
Ha'e clad the iron ground wi' snaw,
The robin, chirpin' frae the wa',
It chirps to me o' thee, love,
It chirps to me o' thee.

The Haunted Dominie and Other Poems.

The bonnie flowers, the summer's pride,
The primrose in her woody glade,
The daisy in its snaw-white bed,
Do whispering speak o' thee, love,
Do whispering speak o' thee.

O may Dame Fortune's kindly smile
Thy hours frae every care beguile,
And keep thee true and free frae wile,
And tell me whiles o' thee, love,
And tell me whiles o' thee.

Though separated far frae thee
By mountain bold or raging sea,
Yet always faithful shall I be,
And ever think o' thee, love,
And ever think o' thee.

MAID OF ANDREAPOLIS.

THE laverock warbles ower the lea,
The birdies sing frae ilka tree,
Liltin' a' in praise o' thee,
Maid of Andreapolis!

Fairer than the flowers o' spring
Keekin' ower the fairy ring
Is the lassie that I sing—
Maid of Andreapolis!

Tresses rich o' raven hair,
Ruby lips beyond compare,
Thou are sweet as thou art fair,
Maid of Andreapolis!

Fearless eyes sae dark and true,
Smile as sweet as honey dew,
Thee alane I e'er can lo'e,
Maid of Andreapolis!

The Haunted Dominie and Other Poems.

In the summer blythe and bright,
In the longsorne winter night,
Thou art a' my heart's delight,
Maid of Andreapolis!

O that I could ca' thee mine,
Win that leal love o' thine,
Claim the heart for which I pine,
Maid of Andreapolis!

Never toil or trouble sair,
Never hard, distressing care,
E'er should line that forehead fair,
Maid of Andreapolis!

The Haunted Dominic and Other Poems.

6. STORIES FROM CHAUCER.

DEDICATION
TO RICHARD MALCOLM, ESQ.,
DOLLAR ACADEMY.

FRIEND of those eager boyhood's hours,
When all the world was golden-hazed,
Who taught us how to try our powers,
And love the things you loved and praised;
Who taught our ready ears to hear
The far-flung melodies of time,
Dan Chaucer, singing loud and clear,
And Milton's slowly moving rhyme,
And all the music of the past,
In major or in minor strain;
The lyric, tripping gay and fast,
The epic's grand and slow refrain;
Who, with your eyes gave us to see
The visions of the golden age,
The great Shakespearian panoply
That came and went upon the stage;

The Haunted Dominie and Other Poems.

Who taught our young, unharnessed feet
To walk with Harry Baillie bold,
From Tabard Inn to Martyr Street,
And hear the " Tales " the Pilgrims told ;
If these, the rhymes which I have caught,
Have aught to please thee in their strain,
I do but sing as you have taught,
And give you but your own again.

THE TALE OF THE NUN'S PRIEST.

IN that blithe season, years and years ago,
When birds and beasts could talk, there lived a
dame
Who owned a cottage, and a pig or two,
And seven fat hens, and, to exploit the same,
A cock, whose Christian name was Chanticleer,
As fine a beast as ever waked the morn,
Or scraped the earth that worms might appear,
Or led his wives in triumph to the corn.
Among his wives, and best beloved of all,
Was one whose name was Mrs. Pertelote,
Ever the first to answer at his call
When he cried, "Chuck! cluck!" in his ample
throat.
And many hours he spent with her among
The treasures of ashpits and of dung.
One morn Sir Chanticleer was very slow
To utter forth his customary crow,
But groaned, and looked around as if in fear,
To whom said Pertelote, "Sir Chanticleer,
Has anything disturbed you in the night
That makes you look around in such affright?"

The Haunted Dominic and Other Poems.

“ Ah, dearest love,” he cried, “ I dreamed a dream,
Methought I wandered by our wonted stream,
And picked the berries for myself and you;
When lo, a hound-like beast came bounding through
The bushes! O it made me shake and quail!
He had a tapered snout and bushy tail,
And was about to fell me at a stroke,
When with amaze I started and awoke.”
“ O mercy, sir,” cried Pertelote, “ you’re ill!
For mercy’s sake, man, take a rhubarb pill.
O dear! O dear! a soldier and afeared!
Have you no man’s heart, though you have a beard?
It is a doze of physic you are needing,
For dreams like this arise from over-feeding.”
“ Nay, dearest heart!” said Chanticleer, “ I say
That something weird will happen us to-day,
For men well versed in every circumstance
Declare that dreams have much significance:
Either they come as warnings to the bad,
Or they are sent to cheerify the sad,
Or else they bring the news of wocsome things
That happen in the night, as murderings,
Or robberies, or violence, or shame,
Or other wickedness without a name.”
But all the argument whercat he minced
Left Mrs. Pertelote still unconvinced.

The Haunted Dominic and Other Poems.

“ Tut, tut! ” she cried, with ill-suppressed ire,
“ It is a dose of physic you require.
Tut, tut! Sir Chanticleer, cheer up, cheer up!
Now sing your song, and let us off to sup;
For lo, the summer sun is up on high,
Twenty degrees or more into the sky,
And birdies in the bushes trill their notes
As if for joy they’d burst their very throats.
Reck not of dreams; come, lead us out of here,
And be yourself again, Sir Chanticleer.”
Then from his perch Sir Chanticleer flew down;
His harem followed him, till everyone
Had gathered round about him where he stood,
A feathered monarch with his feathered brood.
Himself into an attitude he threw,
And thundered forth his “ Cock-a-doodle-doo! ”
And clucked upon his wives with all his might,
And kicked them as they came for sheer delight;
Then clucked again, and summoned them to feed,
Pretending he had found a barley seed;
Then clucked again, and led the band away
To seek their feeding places for the day.
How shall I tell you all that came to pass
Before the day was done? Alas! alas!
I think upon it all with bleeding heart,
And sudden tears that from the eyelids start,

The Haunted Dominic and Other Poems.

And lump that gathers in the throat forbye,
Companion to the lustre of the eye.
O woe! For when the sun was hanging o'er us,
Twenty degrees and one in sign of Taurus,
When sunshine made the earth as brown as rust,
And seven fat hens were bathing in the dust,
And Chanticleer stood watching bold and free,
Singing as clear as Mermaid in the sea,
He suddenly espied a fox that stood
With hungry eyes beside the strip of wood
That fringed the yard. At once the cock had fled,
But that the hungry fox with cunning said,
" Ah, blessed creature! Start not in alarm,
I'd be the very last to work you harm;
Oft in this spot I stand with listening ear
The happy clarion of your notes to hear;
And often as I hear you, I forget
The troubles in the past that I have met;
My heart leaps up with pleasure at the sound
Of these rich notes of yours, so full and round.
I pray you of your courtesy to-day,
Crow once or twice before I go away."'
At this Sir Chanticleer emboldened grew,
And, drawing nearer Reynard, boldly crew.
There's nought like flattery and foolish pride
To lead the good and innocent aside.

The Haunted Dominie and Other Poems.

“ Your music,” said the fox, “ is full of feeling,
It brings the moisture to my eyelids stealing;
But yet it lacks a little of the “ go ”
Which your old father put into his crow.
He was my friend; and he and his brown hen,
Your lady mother, once were in my den.
I did enjoy their fellowship, I tell you;
He was a plump and well-proportioned fellow.
But this is what I meant to say to you,
He put forth so much vigour when he crew
That all the people heard for many a mile,
And both his beady eyes were closed the while.
Now see, can you your father counterfeit? ”
At this Sir Chanticleer began to beat
His wings with might, and stood upon his toes,
And thundered out the loudest of his crows,
And closed his eyes, and thought upon his father,
And hoped he'd emulated him, the rather
That the old fox was watching, as in pride,
With wily head a little turned aside.
Sad are the tragedies of flattery,
As you shall hear. O come and weep with me!
For when Sir Chanticleer had shut his eyes
The fox leaped forward, seized upon the prize,
Which, all unconscious how the foe had tricked him,
Thus fell to flattery an easy victim.

The Haunted Dominic and Other Poems

He caught him by the throat, and off he sped
Towards his den in the dim hazel shade.
O what a wild and melancholy cry
Was raised when Chanticleer went forth to die!
What shouting of the sorrow-stricken hens!
What bellowing of cows beyond the fence!
The very dogs came bounding at the shout
And barked, not knowing what it was about;
The very ducks screwed up their little eyes,
Vociferously quacking in surprise;
The swine, in their excited sympathy,
Slobbered, and grumpled, and wallowed in the sty;
The men and women working on the farm
Came running at this boisterous alarm;
And the old dame forgot about her gout,
And mingled shouting with the mingled shout.
Then, as they spied the fox, each gave pursuit
With very willing tongue and willing foot.
Now, Reynard, burdened with the weight he bore,
Went sweating up the hill and panting sore;
And ever as the noise came on behind,
And growing loud and louder in the wind,
He felt his hopes of eating Chanticleer
Grow faint and fainter, as his den grew near.
But Chanticleer, though held as by a rope,
Began to tingle all with sudden hope

The Haunted Dominic and Other Poems.

That after all his life might saved be,
And cunningly to Reynard thus said he:
“ Sir, were I you, I would not further fly
All burdened by the weight of such as I,
But here, beside this jutting ledge of rock,
I’d pause a minute and devour the cock;
My life is bitter; do it then anon.”
Answered the fox: “ Good faith, it shall be done! ”
But as he oped his mouth to make reply
The watchful cock out of his jaws did fly,
And perching high upon a friendly tree,
Cried “ Cock-a-doodle-doo! ” with savage glee.
“ Ah, blessed creature! ” Reynard cried again,
“ I only meant to let you see my den,
As once your father saw it; now, sir, come
And give me happiness to-day at home.”
“ Tut, tut! ” cried Chanticleer. “ By fair or wet,
Your friendly teeth! Tut, tut! I feel them yet.
When next you catch me dosing, sir, tut! tut!
My two eyes, like my father’s, will be shut.”

THE PRIORESS' TALE.

O COME and listen to my lay,
My doleful lay of grief and sorrow ;
'Twill fill your eyes with tears to-day,
And make you weep again to-morrow.

My tale is of a region wild
Within the heart of Asia Minor ;
Its hero is a little child
Who learnt to sing in sweetest tenor.

He sang his song, his only one,
As sweet as lark above the meadow ;
He was his mother's only son,
And she, poor woman, was a widow.

There was within this ancient town
A street, where many Turks were dwelling,
And this sweet child went daily down
The street to where he got his schooling.

The Haunted Dominic and Other Poems.

One day he heard a class-mate sing
The chant of " Alma Redemptoris ";
It seemed to him a sweeter thing
Than ever he had heard in stories.

And with the quick and eager heart
Of little children at their playing
He learnt to sing the tenor part,
Though understanding not the saying

And as he came and went each day
Between his dwelling and his classes,
He sang his song upon the way,
Like whisper on the breeze that passes.

And many hearing it were glad,
And paused awhile to listen to it;
But all the wicked Turks were mad,
And swore they'd make the child to rue it.

So one black day they caught the child
As home his school-books he was bringing,
And in their passion fierce and wild
They cut his throat to stop his singing.

O gentle Mary in the skies,
Thy little child, dost thou behold him?
O stand beside him where he lies,
And in thy pity soft enfold him!

The Haunted Dominie and Other Poems.

O widowed mother, all alone,
When dark and silent shadows gather,
Thy child is silent as the stone
Upon the grave of his dead father!

O house, bereft of all its mirth,
O lonely chair he used to sit in,
O empty slippers on the hearth,
O lonely, uncompanioned kitten!

Into the night the widow goes,
The weary night, so dark and woesome;
No rest her frenzied spirit knows,
A stinging pain is in her bosom.

“ O have you seen my little boy? ”
She asked of all who knew about him;
“ He was his mother’s only joy,
And cheerless is the house without him.”

“ We never saw your little child,”
The Turks replied, both man and woman.
O sirs, their hearts were stern and wild,
You hardly would have thought them human.

The Haunted Dominic and Other Poems.

So all that night the widow passed
 Among the houses seeking vainly,
But when the morning came at last
 She heard her darling speaking plainly.

It was a filthy rubbish-bin
 To which her weary feet had brought her,
When suddenly she heard him sing,
 “ O alma Redemptoris Mater! ”

As plain as birds among the trees,
 As clear as lightly running water,
She heard the words, and they were these,
 “ O alma Redemptoris Mater! ”

“ O gentle Mary in the sky,
 Show pity to an erring daughter! ”
Hark, soft again came the reply,
 “ O alma Redemptoris Mater! ”

And now the people rush along
 To see what had so sore distraught her,
And to their ears there came the song,
 “ O alma Redemptoris Mater! ”

The Haunted Dominié and Other Poems.

They saw the child so stiff and still
Among the rubbish coldly lying;
The hands of wicked men could kill,
But could not stop an infant crying.

They raised the body from the bin,
And to the abbey safely brought him;
And when the Abott heard him sing
He came, and tremblingly besought him:

“ O by the hard and bitter rood,
My little child, I do beseech you,
O bodes this singing ill or good?
O by the Cross, I pray thee, teach me.”

“ O holy monk,” replied the child—
And when he spoke the Abbot shivered—
“ The hands of cruel Turks me killed,
Nor was I from their blow delivered.

“ But when they slew me Mary came—
The Holy Virgin out of Heaven—
And on my tongue she placed a grain,
And said, ‘ To thee, my child, ’tis given

The Haunted Dominie and Other Poems.

“ ‘ Though dead, to sing this wondrous song,
Whereby the hearts of men are shaken
In every age, till from thy tongue
This little grain away is taken.’

“ So, Holy Father, I you pray,
Remove the grain; for I am weary
To reach the fields of Heaven to-day,
Beside the Holy Virgin Mary.”

The Abbot did as he required,
Removed the grain, and stopped his singing;
The soul went off, as it desired,
Its way to heaven softly winging.

They brought the body to the kirk,
In holy ground the corpse they buried;
And for their foul and horrid work
With fire and sword the Turks they harried.

Be sure your sin will find you out,
However well you may conceal it;
The eyes of Heaven are all about,
And what is hidden they'll reveal it.

THE KNIGHT'S TALE.

IN ancient days, when Theseus was king
In Greece, the Thebans did a cruel thing
To their dead enemies, and gathered all
Into a heap, and without pyre or pall
Left them unburied on the King's highway,
Where dogs and wolves might make of them a prey.
When Theseus of their cruelty was 'ware,
He on his sword a mighty oath did swear
That he would make the Thebans rue the day
When on the dead they wrought such cruelty,
Else he would lose his kingdom. So his force
He gathered round him, all his men and horse,
And fierce and furious rode he at their head
To punish those that dared insult the dead.
Oh mighty Thebes, thy prowess and thy fame
Were sunk to nothingness when Theseus came
A minister of anger and of right!
Thy men are weak as women in the fight,
Thy dead are stacked in heaps upon the field.

The Haunted Dominie and Other Poems.

Thy living helplessly submit and yield.
In one fierce battle Thebes was lost and won,
And Theseus victor ere the set of sun.
That night, when men across the silent plain
Were plundering the bodies of the slain,
They found two youthful princes lying there,
Not quite alive, nor wholly dead they were;
But in each other's arms they silent lay.
The stars looked down in solemn sympathy.
To Theseus' tent they straightway bore the two,
And he, in anger, without more ado
Condemned them, if perchance they should not die,
To the lone horrors of captivity
In his Athenian prison far away.
Alas! oh Palamon and Arcite,
Farewell, sweet liberty; farewell, sweet plain!
Farewell, dear homes we may not see again!
Farewell, sweet light upon the Theban hills!
Farewell, soft stars that solace human ills!
Oh aching hearts! Oh dreary prison night!
Farewell, sweet liberty; farewell, sweet light!
Within the dungeon drear were Palamon
And Arcite, his comrade, left alone.

.
The weary year sped on, the lagging day,
Until it happened, on a morn in May,

The Haunted Dominie and Other Poems.

When dew was on the leaves at morning hour,
And Palamon was gazing from his tower,
He saw a maiden in the garden there,
Fresh as a rose, and as the morning fair,
And fresher than the mayflower, wet with dew,
And like the opening rosebud was her hue.
Her eye was clear, her brow was straight and bold;
Her ample tresses shone in mists of gold.
With her sweet voice the wakening morning rang,
And all the garden listened as she sang.
As Palamon kept gazing in surprise
A soft and dewy lustre filled his eyes;
And when he heard the words that she did sing,
Within the captive's bosom love was king.
He sighed, as one who sees the distant strand
Of subtle Fancy's fair and distant land,
And knows he cannot enter. At his sigh
Came Arcite, his comrade, and stood by
The window, and beheld the wondrous maid.
Then unto Palamon he turned, and said:
" Oh brother in adversity, my heart
Is thrilled with Love's old sweetly-bitter dart.
If e'er, by manhood's virtue, or God's grace,
I leave this sorrowful and lonely place,
I shall go woo that maiden standing there."
" Nay! nay! " said Palamon, " that is not fair!

The Haunted Dominie and Other Poems.

For I was first to see the maid, and I
At sight of her gave utterance to the cry
That brought you to my side. I loved her first
Before you ever saw her, and you durst
Not interfere between my love and me.”
“ Now hush, good Palamon,” said Arcite,
“ For who was first to speak about his love?
Or willing first by manly deeds to prove
The strength of his affection? It was I.
I was the first to speak, you did but sigh;
And sighing is not love, as you well know.
But unto lonely mortals here below
The law of love is this: Each one must fight
For his own hand. Here might is right.
For there is reason in the ancient saw
That asks, ‘ Who shall give lovers any law?’
Love if you like, but I too love, and shall;
And truly, my good brother, this is all.”

.

Meanwhile the maiden in the garden bowers
Thought only of her singing and her flowers.
Sweet Emily, the sister of the Queen,
Unconscious she that ever she had been
A cause of strife or sorrow unto man,

The Haunted Dominie and Other Poems.

Gathered her flowers, and sang her songs, and ran
Back to the palace, happy as the morn,
And left the weary captives more forlorn.
The lonely day sighed wistfully for night;
The troubled darkness wearied for the light;
And night and day each wished to see again
The maiden who had caused his tender pain.
And day and night, because of heart-sickness,
The old companions loved each other less.

.

At last it happened that Perotheus,
A friend and comrade of Duke Theseus,
Had come to Athens, all that he might look
Upon the face of his old friend, the Duke;
And, as they talked, he learnt to his dismay
That in the prison tower young Arcite,
Whom he had known and loved in other days,
Was fast confined and strange to freedom's ways.
He prayed the Duke to set the prisoner free.
He, for the love he bore him, did agree
To let him go; but threatened that if e'er
His former captive ever were to dare
Return to Theseus' kingdom he should die.
And Arcite gave promise readily,
If once away he should return no more,
But dwell in his own kingdom as before.

The Haunted Dominic and Other Poems.

“ Oh blessed light,” he shouted in his joy,
As happy and as careless as a boy,
“ Farewell to prison life and weary cell!
Farewell, oh Palamon, farewell! farewell!
Sing on, ye happy birds upon the tree,
For liberty and light are dear to me!
Oh gentle zephyrs, whispering of morn,
To liberty and life I now return.”

.
But ever, as he journeyed to his home,
A bitter, stinging thought to him did come,
As to a man who on a happy day
Remembers a dead victim suddenly,
And stiffens with remorse amid his joy.
So Arcite, in freedom, felt annoy
And pain strike through him as he thought upon
Sweet Emily, and knew that Palamon
Might see her sometimes passing by his tower;
But he, alas! such joy was past his power.
And ever as he thought he seemed to see
That Palamon was better off than he.
With Emily a prison life was peace;
Without her, liberty was not in Greece.
Meanwhile behind the weary prison wall
Sat Palamon, alone and friendless all,

The Haunted Dominie and Other Poems.

And stared into the night with misty eye,
Sick in his soul, and longing he might die.
The moonlight danced along the prison bars;
The nightingale was singing to the stars;
And, in and out among the orchard trees,
The little leaves coquetted with the breeze.
Beneath the throbbing of the moonlit sky
All Nature's voices shouted "Liberty."
But to the lonely captive in his cell
The choir of voices seemed Hope's dying knell.
For Arcite was now unbound and free,
With naught to stay his love for Emily.
Now, gentle reader, let me ask of you,
Which was the worst misfortunèd of the two?
The one may see his lady every day,
But in his prison he must ever stay;
The other is as free as summer air,
But nevermore can see his lady fair.

.

Four slow, reluctant years have passed away,
Four weary, lonely years to Arcite,
Who, in his liberty, did ever wear
A sorrow in his heart, a heavy care—
The thought of Emily, whom he had lost—
His liberty, alas! too dear had cost.
And oft he envied hapless Palamon

The Haunted Dominie and Other Poems.

The sight his captive eyes were resting on ;
And wished himself a captive in the tower,
Beside the garden and his lady's bower.
Unable longer to endure his pain,
He hastened back to Theseus again,
Disguised, unknown, a squire of low degree,
To be a servant near his Emily.
For three long years he served in Theseus' hall,
And he so courteous was, and brave withal,
So kind and manly unto every wight,
That Theseus, delighted, made him knight,
And gave him care of all his choicest things,
His rooms, his robes, his treasures, his rings.
And often, as he journeyed here and there,
He saw and spoke with Emily, the fair.
And stronger grew his passion for the maid,
And " I will make her mine," he fiercely said.
And Palamon, unknowing of his vow,
Felt Emily was passing from him now.
At last, when seven years had passed away
Since Palamon was 'prisoned, came a day
When his unhappy jailor, drinking deep
Of Grecian wine, sank heavily to sleep,
Forgetful of his keys and of his guard,
Which Palamon observing, broke his ward,
And when the evening shades began to lower

The Haunted Dominie and Other Poems

Sped from his prison in the lonely tower,
And hurrying to a grove—ah, well-a-day!—
Found there his former comrade, Arcite.
And Arcite, all jealous lest his love,
Almost his own, should yet from him remove,
Saw but a rival in his former friend,
And, full of hate and fury, thought to end
All rivalry between them, and amain
He drew his sword, but lowered it again,
For Palamon unarmed before him stood,
And Theseus came riding through the wood,
Home from the hunting, in the fading light.
And when the Duke beheld his favoured knight
Thus standing up to fight another man,
He brought the two before him, and began
To question them concerning this their strife,
And why they sought to take each other's life.
And when he learned what they had to say,
That they were Palamon and Arcite,
That for the love of Emily, the Queen,
They two were enemies who friends had been;
And that, because they loved the maiden still,
Each sought the rival in his love to kill.
Then Theseus was pained in his heart,
And to his eyes the tears began to start,
And, full of pity for the sad affair,

The Haunted Dominie and Other Poems.

He tenderly addressed the hapless pair.
“ Knights,” said he, “ by our laws you should not live ;
Yet here and now I do your faults forgive ;
For I myself have known a lover’s bane,
In all its hopeful hopelessness and pain.
And well I know that by your birth and life
You are both worthy of a royal wife ;
And yet you know that this dear sister mine
Could not be wife to both at the same time.
My counsel, therefore, to you both would be,
That you should make appeal to Destiny,
To settle which shall have her once for all.
Return to Thebes, and see if you can call
An hundred knights together, each of you,
Armed with blades, attempered, tried, and true,
And lead them down to Athens in a year,
And try your cause, and prove your manhood here.
Whichever beats the other in the strife
Shall have our sister Emily to wife.
This is my counsel. Now, if ye are men,
Begone, and in a year come back again.”

.
The year flew by, and when at last the day
Arrived came Palamon and Arcite
To Athens with a hundred knights apiece,
That by their contest once for all should cease

The Haunted Dominie and Other Poems.

'The strife between them. Theseus had prepared
His tilting lists for battle. Thither fared
The glittering knights, in burnished steel and gold.
The Athenians came in thousands, to behold
The issues of the fight. Hippolyta,
The wife of Theseus; and fair Emily,
The harmless cause of all the hurtful strife,
Came, that she might become the victor's wife.

.

How shall I tell of all that bloody fight?
How tell of many a sorely wounded knight
Who fell that day in the Athenian ring
Fighting for Emily before the King?
How shall I tell you how the people cried,
And clamoured for the one or other side?
Or counted all the captives, one by one,
That fell to Arcite or Palamon?
For Theseus, ere yet the fight began,
Decreed that if in fighting any man
Fell from his horse, or else was captive ta'en,
That he should not therefore be forthwith slain,
But merely from the fight must step aside,
To wait what fortune should his friends betide.
At last it happened, much I grieve to tell,
That Palamon from off his charger fell
As he was moving through the thickest fight

The Haunted Dominie and Other Poems

In search of Arcite, his rival knight.
And Theseus, when he beheld him fall,
Made proclamation to the warriors all
That they should cease their strife, for victory
And Emily were both for Arcite.
And Palamon in sorrow bowed his head,
And wished that he had now been lying dead
Upon the battlefield. And as he sighed,
His rival, Arcite, began to ride
Along the lists in triumph, that he might,
By feats of horsemanship within the sight
Of Emily, win favours from his love,
And that by daring courage he might prove
He was a knight whom she could well admire.
The horse was full of mettle and of fire,
And leapt, and pranced, and curvetted, and shied,
While all the people present cheered and cried,
“ Hurrah for Arcite and Emily,
We wish them joy upon their wedding day! ”
But at the cheer the horse took sudden fright,
And swerved, and reared, and bucked with all his might,
And pitched the rider forward on his head,
And Emily was widowed or ere wed.
But ere he died the hapless Arcite
Called Palamon, and thus to him did say:
“ Oh Palamon, my rival, yet my friend,

The Haunted Dominie and Other Poems.

I little thought that thus our strife should end.
I cannot live to wed the maid I've won.
To thee, my friend, my rival, Palamon,
My Emily, the star of all my life,
I give to you, Oh Palamon, for wife.
Oh precious jewel, won but to be lost,
How dearly Arcite has paid the cost
Of loving thee!" And so it came to be,
When she had mourned a while for Arcite,
That Emily was to the altar led,
And there to Palamon was safely wed.
And Palamon, in sweet and humble pride,
Went home to Thebes, and took his lovely bride,
The fairest, sweetest, best that man had seen,
To rule with him in Thebes—a Theban Queen.

THE PARDONER'S TALE.

It was three very wicked men,
With mirth, and curse, and din,
Sat drinking deep, and drinking long,
Within the village inn.

And as they mingled wine and mirth
And curses, it befel
A solemn funeral did pass,
With bier and book and knell.

“ Now say, good host, and what is this
Thou view'st with bated breath? ”
“ Be still, my merry men,” said he,
“ For this is surely Death!

“ And he who lies upon yon bier
Was once your earthly friend,
But Death and Pestilence have brought
Him to untimely end.”

“ Now by the Holy Rood,” said they,
“ If Death so deals with men,
We three shall watch by night and day
To pay him back again.”

The Haunted Dominie and Other Poems

So these three men have taken oath,
By all they hold most dear,
To hunt for death with naked sword,
And bring him to the bier.

“ Away, away, my merry men,
While yet the sun is high;
Away and find this murderer,
And smite him hip and thigh! ”

So they have ridden east and west,
But none like Death they found,
Until they met an aged carle,
Was seated on the ground.

“ Say, greybeard, have you ever met
In threescore years and ten
This murderer, whose name is Death,
This foe to fun and men? ”

“ Full often, sirs,” the old man said,
“ I’ve met him face to face
In many a home, and many a street,
And many a lonely place.

“ And but a little while ago,
If you should care to see,
I saw him sitting all alone
By yonder old yew tree.”

The Haunted Dominie and Other Poems.

Then up and ran these rioters
To where the tree did stand,
With ugly curses on their lips,
And naked swords in hand.

But when they reached the sombre yew,
They saw to their surprise
A heap of yellow golden coins
Lay dazzling their eyes.

Then straight beside the glittering gold
They threw themselves in glee,
And clean forgot their feud with Death
Beneath the old yew tree.

“ Now harken, lads, to me,” said one,
“ Here’s gold enough for all
To take their fill of life and fun
In palace or in hall.

“ But if we move this treasure bright
Before the night has come,
We shall be slain by ready thieves
Or ere we get it home.

“ My rede is this, that two should stay
Beside the treasure good,
While one of us goes back to town,
For baskets, wine, and food.

The Haunted Dominie and Other Poems.

“ Then in the night, when darkness hides
Our work from curious eye,
With three good baskets full of gold
’Tis homeward we shall hie.”

The lot is drawn, the youngest goes
For victuals to the town;
And by the pile of yellow gold
The other two sit down.

“ Now, brother,” said the elder rogue,
“ I scarce need say to you
This gold you see is good for three,
But better far for two.

“ So, when our fellow shall return
With basket, food, and wine,
How say you, shall we take him off
Before we start to dine? ”

“ Aye, that we shall,” his mate replied,
“ For better would it be
To halve in two, twixt me and you,
What else were shared by three.

“ So, if you speak with him awhile
When he returns from town,
I shall go round behind his back
And straightway cut him down.”

The Haunted Dominie and Other Poems.

A most unholy thing is greed,
And cruel as the grave;
It snares the weakest of the weak,
The bravest of the brave.

The youngest knave has reached the town,
And buys the things he seeks;
But ere he hurries back again
Thus to himself he speaks:

“ Why should not I secure it all?
Methinks the gold that shone
Beneath yon tree is good for three,
But best of all for one.

“ Now, if I put a poison drop
Within their glass of wine,
They’ll die, these two, with no ado,
Leaving the treasure mine.”

He has attained the leech’s shop,
The poison he has bought,
Then for the twain he mixes bane,
With ne’er a softened thought.

Then swift he hurries to the wood,
Where fatal treasure lies;
And when he sees his mates again,
Thus cheerily he cries:

The Haunted Dominie and Other Poems.

“ O here is meat, and here is drink,
And baskets three all told,
That you may feed your hungry need,
And carry off the gold.

“ But as for me, I shall not touch
The meat and drink I bring,
For, being hungry, in the town
I feasted like a king.

“ Myself will lie beside this gold,
And feast my hungry eyes
Upon this bright and shining sight
That here before me lies.

“ So eat your fill, my merry men,
And leave me with the gold.”
And on the coins he threw him down
Like wolf upon the fold.

But from the grass on which he lay
He never rose again;
The ruffian knife has found his life,
And spilt it on the plain.

Then of the poisoned food he brought,
They eat and drink their fill;
And, ere the light gives place to night,
All three are cold and still.

The Haunted Dominie and Other Poems.

“ Be sure your sin will find you out! ”
The Holy Word it saith;
The gold they found upon the ground
Was nothing else than Death.

THE MAN OF LAW'S TALE.

It was the Emperor of Rome,
A mighty man of high estate,
Who dwelt in humble peace at home,
As good a man as he was great.

It was his daughter, Dame Constance,
As sweet a heart as ever prayed;
Full many a knight would break a lance
To win the favour of the maid.

As pure as snow upon the hill,
As blythe as bird upon the tree,
She sang her song, she wrought her will
In deeds of holy charity.

It was the Sultan far away,
In lone Assyria he stayed;
And from his merchants on a day
He heard about the gracious maid.

And as he thought about her worth,
And learnt how good and fair was she,
He said aloud, " In all this earth
There is no other maid for me! "

The Haunted Dominic and Other Poems.

And ever by him, day and night,
In court, in chase, and in the dance
There gleamed, in letters golden bright,
A vision of the word "Constance."

And courtiers who saw his woe,
Who heard him vow and heard him sigh,
Together whispered, soft and low,
"Our lord must wed or he will die!"

"O will you give your daughter dear
To be my lawful wedded wife?
And she shall reign as monarch here,
And I will keep her with my life.

"And I shall be a Christian man,
If only you will give your daughter;
And she will teach me, as she can,
The faith which you and yours have taught her.

"And all my folks shall follow me,
And sprinkled be with Holy Water,
And all the land will Christian be,
If only you will give your daughter."

So wrote he to that worthy King,
The mighty Emperor of Rome,
Who, when he had perceived the thing,
Said, "Constance, you must leave your home.

The Haunted Dominie and Other Poems.

“ And you must sail across the tide,
And wedded be to this Sultan,
And there his Queen you shall abide,
And make of him a Christian man.”

No marvel that the lady wept
When this command she did receive,
And in the night, while others slept,
Found such abundant cause to grieve.

For she must up, and straight depart
From mother, father, friend, and home;
And home's the dwelling of the heart,
Be it in Syria or Rome.

O glorious was the array,
And splendid was it to be seen,
That went to far Assyria
To make Constance the Sultan's Queen.

Beside her all her maidens stood,
And knights and squires of high degree,
And mitred bishops, tall and good,
Resplendent in their dignity.

Now in that distant Sultan land
The Sultan's mother she did stay;
O cruel, crimson was her hand
With blood of those whom she did slay.

The Haunted Dominie and Other Poems.

And when the Sultan had declared
That he would die a Christian mild,
No longer for her son she cared,
As mother careth for a child.

And when Dame Constance had set sail
With all her bishops, knights, and squires,
She cried, " No cursed Christian shall
Defile our minarets and spires ! "

So hired she base and wicked men
To do her base and wicked work ;
Their hearts were twice as black again
As those of Philistine or Turk.

O who can tell of all the cheer
That welcomed Constance and her knights !
The pealing bells, the music clear ;
The glory of the swinging lights ;

The horsemen, flitting to and fro,
Upon their proud and barbèd steeds ;
The crowds that watched them come and go,
And loud applauded all their deeds ;

The painted boats upon the stream ;
The long procession on the strand—
It seemed a glorious fairy dream
In far-off phantom fairy-land.

The Haunted Dominie and Other Poems.

But in the midst of all the glee
Some hearts are thinking bitter things ;
The snake is creeping to the tree
On which the care-free robin sings.

For when the marriage feast was spread,
And plenty crowned the festal board,
And when the marriage rite was read,
Uniting Constance to her lord,

Forth to the feast came armed men
Whom the old Sultanness had hired,
And every Christian man was slain,
As in her fury she desired.

The Sultan too, her only son,
Her only son she took and killed ;
And when the savage deed was done,
Her heart with savage joy was filled.

And not a single one was left
Of all the belted knights of Rome ;
Of all her bishops, too, bereft,
The widowed Constance stood alone.

They led her to an open boat
That tossed upon the restless sea ;
They pushed her in to sink or float,
Provisioned very scantily.

The Haunted Dominie and Other Poems.

Of helm to guide her on her way,
Of shelter from the midday sun,
Of bedesman for her soul to pray,
In all the vessel there were none.

O who will save the Sultan's Queen?
O who will bring her home again?
O who will o'er her gently lean,
And save her from the tossing main?

If you will tell me who it was
Saved Daniel in the lions' den,
Or who, 'gainst Nature's rigid laws,
Brought Jonah from the deep again;

If you will tell me whose the will
That packed the waves of the Red Sea,
Or who it was said, "Peace, be still!"
To tumbling storms on Galilee;

Then shall I tell you whose the hand
That swayed the helm, and safely bore
The boat to far Northumberland,
And grounded it upon the shore,

And brought the Constable to look
Upon this vessel that had come,
And, seeing gentle Constance, took
And brought her to his wife at home.

The Haunted Dominic and Other Poems

O good was gracious Hermengild,
And kind the Constable was he
To her, whom neither famine killed,
Nor raging waters of the sea.

“ And this shall be our child,” they said,
“ Whom we have gotten from the water;
Whate’er we own of bread and board
We’ll share it with our new-found daughter.”

So Constance lived beside the pair,
And loved her kindly foster friends,
And where was trouble anywhere
She ever tried to make amends,

Till all the people near and far
Had come to know and love the maid,
Whose thought was pure as throbbing star,
Whose heart was warm and unafraid,

Whose hands were foremost to relieve
The poor, or sick, or sorrowing,
Whose ready love found cause to grieve
With every weak or helpless thing,

Whose smile was sweet as morning light
That shimmers o’er the eastern hills,
And makes the waking world seem bright,
And soothes the sting of human ills.

The Haunted Dominic and Other Poems.

And little children at their game
Were gleeful as she passed them by,
And old, and poor, and weak, and lame
Kept gazing at her wistfully;
For she could play the children's part,
And blend her laughter with their cheer,
And she could soothe an aching heart,
And dry the old folks' ready tear.
So through the course of weeks and days
She went her unassuming way,
And often spoke her Master's praise,
And taught the folk to watch and pray;
Till, in the end, King Alla heard
The people tell what they had seen,
And to the Constable he fared
To ask Dame Constance for his Queen
And when the maid and he were wed,
They lived at home a year or so,
Until the Scotch folk made a raid,
And Alla went to fight the foe.
And when the King was in the north
Among his foemen winning fame,
His well-beloved Queen brought forth
A son to bear his rank and name;

The Haunted Dominie and Other Poems.

A little son, as sweet as joy,
As soft and chubby as a peach,
And shapely as a Cupid boy
That shoots his arrows out of reach.

O joy to press that little hand,
To kiss the cheek so pink and white,
And dream that one day he would stand
Beside his father's throne in might !

O bliss to see him fast asleep,
To stroke his soft and curly hair !
“ Dear angels, come and gently peep
At this, my darling sleeping there ! ”

But Donnegild, the evil one,
The aged mother of the King,
Who hated Constance and her son,
Conceived and did a hateful thing.

She wrote a letter full of lies,
And to King Alla sent it off :
“ The son you longed for, as a prize,
Is born to make your people scoff ;
“ And all your hopes, so sweet and rich,
Of precious offspring are frustrated ;
Your good Dame Constance is a witch,
Your son, a monster to be hated.

The Haunted Dominic and Other Poems.

“ I would not have her in my house,
I will not keep her child beside me;
Else men from every land will come
And point their finger, and deride me.

“ Our people here are nothing loth-
To send them off without ado;
We'll rid the country of them both—
Of her and of her infant too.”

Now Alla, when he got this note,
Was full of sorrow and regret,
To think he'd lost, or e'er he got,
The son on whom his heart was set.

And with a hot, impulsive pen,
While heart and brain within him burned,
He wrote this letter back again
To every one whom it concerned :

“ Whate'er my wife or child may be,
I pray you keep them till I come;
My wife an angel is to me;
You shall not drive her from my home.

“ It grieves my heart that this my child,
On whom my hopes were set so high,
Should be a creature rude and wild—
No babe, but a monstrosity.

The Haunted Dominie and Other Poems

“ But whether he be beast or man,
Protect him from the evil eye,
And cherish him as best you can,
For he who injures him shall die.”

So wrote he unto Donnegild,
The aged Queen, the cursed woman,
In pagan wickednesses skilled,
With heart unholy and inhuman.

But when his letter came to her
She stole the royal seal, and wrote
Unto the Constable: “ Kind sir,
Go search and find the open boat

“ In which the woman called Constance
Sailed hither nigh two years ago;
Provision it in abundance,
And have it ready at the flow

“ Of the next tide, and put therein
This wicked woman and her child;
She is no more a wife of mine,
But just a witch and sorceress wild.

“ Go, have it done without debate.
The order that I give is sealed
With mine own seal. Affairs of State
Require this matter be concealed.”

The Haunted Dominie and Other Poems.

And so, across the harbour bar
The woman and her child they bring.
It was a mystery to her;
She did not understand the thing.

She only said, " If so my lord
Has given command, so must it be;
I trust myself unto His word
Who rules the tempests of the sea."

Away they sail into the night,
Across the lone, unsheltered deep,
A woman conscious of her right,
A little baby fast asleep.

" O Thou, who on Thy lonely path
Didst cheer an infant when it wailed,
And who, in heathen Zarephath,
Didst fill the cruse that never failed,

" Protect this little child that lies
Asleep beside this aching breast;
Look down in pity from the skies,
And bid the billows be at rest!

" O Thou, who guided'st Israel's host—
A fire by night, a cloud by day,—
Protect the boat lest it be lost,
Or be a mournful castaway!

The Haunted Dominie and Other Poems.

“ O Thou, who on the Cross didst bleed
In pain and anguish wearily,
Behold a woman in her need,
And minister Thy sympathy ! ”

The weary days went gliding on,
And loiteringly the night went past ;
O but for love of her sweet son,
The mother had gone mad at last.

Alone, alone, they drifted forth,
This mother and her helpless lamb ;
But He was watchful over both,
Who makes the storm into a calm.

For, as upon a summer night,
She watched the moon with sleepless eye,
And wearied for the dawning light,
The shadow of a sail went by.

“ A ship ! ” she cried, and in amaze
She hurried to her vessel’s side,
And lo, before her eager gaze,
A fleet of warrior ships did ride.

It was her father’s fleet, for he
Had sent them to the Assyrian land
To avenge their spite and cruelty
To Constance and her murdered band.

The Haunted Dominic and Other Poems.

And as they neared their home again
After long days of war and strife,
They met her thus upon the main—
A mother, and an outcast wife.

They brought her safely back to Rome,
The Rome she left three years ago;
And there a stranger took her home,
And rested her from pain and woe.

When Alla had returned from war
He sought in vain for wife and child;
He heard how they were sent afar
By order of Queen Donnegild.

His heart was sore within his breast;
He could not wait in peace at home;
But, all to cure his wild unrest,
Set out a penitent for Rome.

Set out for Rome to ease his smart;
Set out to seek for rest and peace;
And from the burden at his heart
Find absolution and release.

A lonely man he came to Rome,
With bleeding heart beneath his pride;
He tarried at a stranger's home
To await his summons and his guide.

The Haunted Dominie and Other Poems.

The stranger's home became the ground
Of happy union and romance,
For there at last King Alla found
His little son and Dame Constance.

And when their tales were told at last,
And each saw truth in other's face,
The weary burden from them passed,
And heart met heart in warm embrace.

And when he kissed her golden hair,
O March ran forward into May,
And all the world was warm and fair,
And not a cloud to dull the day.

So to the Emperor they go,
King Alla and his lovely bride,
With all the story of their woe,
Their new-found joy, and hope, and pride.

Then back again to Britain's shore
With pomp and happiness they hie,
To leave each other nevermore,
But love and cherish till they die.

GLOSSARY.

Ablins—perhaps.

Bauch—blunt.

Bauchles—old shoes.

Bielleded—sheltered.

Birstle—to warm.

Bouffin—barking.

Brat—apron.

Brog—to pierce.

Bum—to sing.

Byous—beyond the ordinary.

Clarty—dirty.

Clipe—to inform, to tell.

C'lootin'-stool—a shoemaker's bench.

Codd—to deceive.

Crap—hill-top.

Curran—a number of.

Darg—a day's work.

Dirlin'—tingling.

Donga—a washed-out part of the veld.

Dook—a Kafir woman's head-dress.

Drift—crossing.

The Haunted Dominie and Other Poems.

GLOSSARY—Continued.

Ensel—auger.

Feck—the most part.

Fikey—difficult.

Fozy—soft, or spongy.

Fum'lin'—feeling.

Gawd—fishing-rod.

Happit—buried.

Hazert—half-dry.

Hench awa'—to move off.

Hirple—limp.

Histie—dry.

Hoast—cough.

Hobbin'-feet—the iron last.

Hotchin'—jerking along.

Houff—to shelter.

Hunker—to squat down.

Indaba—matter, palaver.

Jow—to move, to toll.

Kafir-boem—a tree whose red flowers appearing are a signal to the Kafir that it is time to start ploughing.

Killywimples—cheap, tawdry ornaments.

Kloof—a rugged glen.

Knowt—cattle beasts.

Kopje—hill.

Krantz—a hill precipice.

The Haunted Dominie and Other Poems

GLOSSARY (Continued).

Laich—low.

Lift—sky.

Lingles—resined thread.

Mealies—Indian corn, extensively used as food in South Africa.

Moucher—a sly trout.

Neive—the fist.

Onchancy—uncertain

Orra—occasional.

Oxter—arm-pit.

Pack ends and awls—to make ready for death.

Pap—porridge.

Peeh—to breathe hard.

Picanin—Kafir baby.

Pliskies—tricks.

Plum-jordan—a stone once used by old soutars to polish the soles.

Proochie leddy!—a call to a cow, from the French
“ Approchez ! ”

Ran—a part of the heel.

Red—the raw native, whose blanket dress is dyed with red ochre.

Ringle-c'ed—with the white of the eye abnormally large.

The Haunted Dominie and Other Poems.

GLOSSARY—Continued.

Roset-ends—the ends of the shoemaker's thread to which bristles are attached to take the place of needles.

Roupy—hoarse.

Rowin'-chowin'—rolling downhill in one another's arms.

Rowth—plenty.

Rowtin'—bellowing.

Saw—a wise saying.

Scougin'—sheltering.

Shauchled—misshapen.

Sheugh—a furrow.

Skail—to dismiss.

Skult—to thrash.

Sloken—to quench thirst.

Spavin'd—lame.

Speil—to climb.

Spruit—a stream.

Spurdie—a sparrow.

Steik—to stitch.

Stoep—the verandah.

Sweer—unwilling.

Thole—bear.

Tickie—a threepenny piece.

Tikolosh'—the river spirit.

Tilly-knap—a clay-faced knoll.

The Haunted Dominie and Other Poems.

GLOSSARY—Continued.

- *Troke*—dealings.
- Umfundis'*—teacher, missionary.
- Vlei*—a stretch of surface water.
- Yappin'*—crying.
- Yett*—gate.
- Yird*—earth.
- Yowes*—ewes.

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